



**Strategic Plan  
Overview  
2026 — 2028**

Une version en Français sera  
disponible prochainement.

Supporting elected leaders  
to build the future we need.

# Climate Caucus



# Introduction

**Climate Caucus’ 2026-28 Strategic Plan is developed with the acknowledgment of—and a commitment to mitigating—the interconnected, complex challenges faced by Canadians and their leaders.**

A growing affordability crisis, and significant polarisation and mistrust, require local elected leaders — everyone, for that matter — to fight on a number of political and social fronts. Meanwhile, the political economy of climate policy continues to narrow in the face of economic precarity, organised mis/disinformation campaigns, and federal policy which prioritises fossil fuels over renewable energies.

In short, as Canadians weather the social and financial hardships of increasing climate impacts and international power plays, it is all the more challenging for local elected leaders to enact policies that keep their communities safe and prosperous.

Our strategic priorities stem not only from acknowledging these challenging times but recognising the opportunities that lie within them.

We know, from study after study, that action at a local level can increase support for broader climate policies, reduce social mistrust and grow citizens’ political agency. And we know the significant impact that local climate policy can have not only on the

wellbeing of community members but on Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions. When change may feel out of reach at national and intra-national levels, local is where we can have tangible, widespread impact — as citizens, leaders and as an organisation.

As such, there has never been a more important time to focus on local political priorities that can support Canadians to build secure, joyful lives. Doing so, and sharing how it’s done, has an impact beyond the boundaries of our communities. There has never been a more opportune moment to bolster the work of local elected leaders, whose social trust can not only support essential climate policy, but can begin to mend significant social ills such as polarisation. There has never been a more critical moment for climate-forward local elected leaders to speak with one voice to ensure national change happens, and lands in our communities, at the pace and scale we need.

We are proud to lead this work at Climate Caucus. Ours is an ambitious strategy: one which acknowledges the bold progress of our organisation to date, and which challenges us to meet the current moment by deepening our resources and reconsidering our priorities. We look forward to collaborating with our members, partners, funders and our broader community to turn these pages into reality—and results—in the years ahead.

—Zoe Grams, Executive Director

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### Information Gathering Process

- In-depth interviews with Climate Caucus' Board of Directors.
- In-depth interviews with an additional 10 Climate Caucus members.
- Two surveys sent to members.
- Interviews with more than 15 key funders, partners and collaborative organizations.
- Desk research including significant news reviews and academic paper research.

#### Some of what we sought to understand during the planning process was:

- What are the biggest barriers to people implementing climate policies in their communities?
- How does Climate Caucus fit within the larger ecosystem (including possible duplications or overlaps)?
- What are the core, unmet needs of electeds?
- What are key opportunities for us to achieve over the next three years?
- What do/could we offer that is of greatest value to local electeds, and that no one else offers?
- How can we build a strategic plan that is robust enough to succeed in a rapidly shifting political context in Canada and beyond?

### What We Found

#### The Federal Political Landscape



- **Mis/Disinformation A Key Challenge:** A majority of Climate Caucus members cite mis/disinformation as a key concern, preventing climate policy, and other progressive policies, from being supported publicly or at council tables.
- **Climate Denial is Growing:** 9% fewer Canadians believe climate change is human-caused compared to two years ago (63% as of Feb 2025).
- **Climate Is A Wedge:** Despite the vast majority of Canadians being concerned about climate impacts, climate is increasingly being used as a wedge issue, especially in the US, which leads to repoliticizing previously accepted climate policies in Canada.
- **Austerity / Affordability Challenges:** With significant economic pressures on our national economy, and affordability a pressing concern for Canadians, short-term economic gain is a focus in local, provincial and federal politics.
- **Polarisation and Erosion of Trust is Rife:** Polarisation is rapidly increasing just as trust in institutions continues to erode.
- **Federal Complexity:** International threats, affordability challenges and growing climate skepticism means federal climate funding—and large-scale, climate-forward solutions—are uncertain.
- **Increased Economic and Security Risks:** A volatile international security environment means the current minority government is moving from progressive policies to maintain power — and to work against intra-national challenges.



### These Trends Look Set To Continue Amidst Growing International Strife And Uncertainty.

- **Canadians Are Still Concerned:** 67% of Canadians are concerned about extreme weather and 74% are concerned about climate change.
- **And Canadians Want Action:** Two-thirds of Canadians favour developing clean energy over fossil fuels, while 85 percent wish to maintain or increase federal climate action.
- **Renewables Are More Efficient Than Ever:** Renewable energy is cheaper than fossil fuels in 90% of cases, while other climate-positive technologies and policies also offer money-saving and deeply beneficial co-benefits.
- **Local Leaders Hold Significant Trust:** Canadians trust their local governments above other orders of government, enabling not only significant local progress but the potential for broader political impacts from this group.
- **Local Is The Frontline of Progress:** Trust in local government, alongside proof that local work can reduce polarization, increase social cohesion and lead to greater trust in large-scale climate policies, means a focus on local has never been more important — nor more strategic.

As a result, we see it as our duty to counter concerning, widespread political patterns — and our opportunity to do so with some of the most trusted leaders in the country.



### Local Elected Leaders' Experiences

**Political & Cultural**

- Growing increase in climate-policy resistant councils.
- Significant pushback: "climate is too expensive."
- Fear of backlash discourages councillors from speaking out.
- "Woke" framing is increasingly used to attack climate policy.

**Structural & Institutional**

- Short-term costs outweigh long-term benefits.
- Provincial overrides of municipal decisions narrow decision making capabilities.
- Small and rural municipalities lack project capacity.
- Climate plans are slow to be operationalised.

**Resource Gaps**

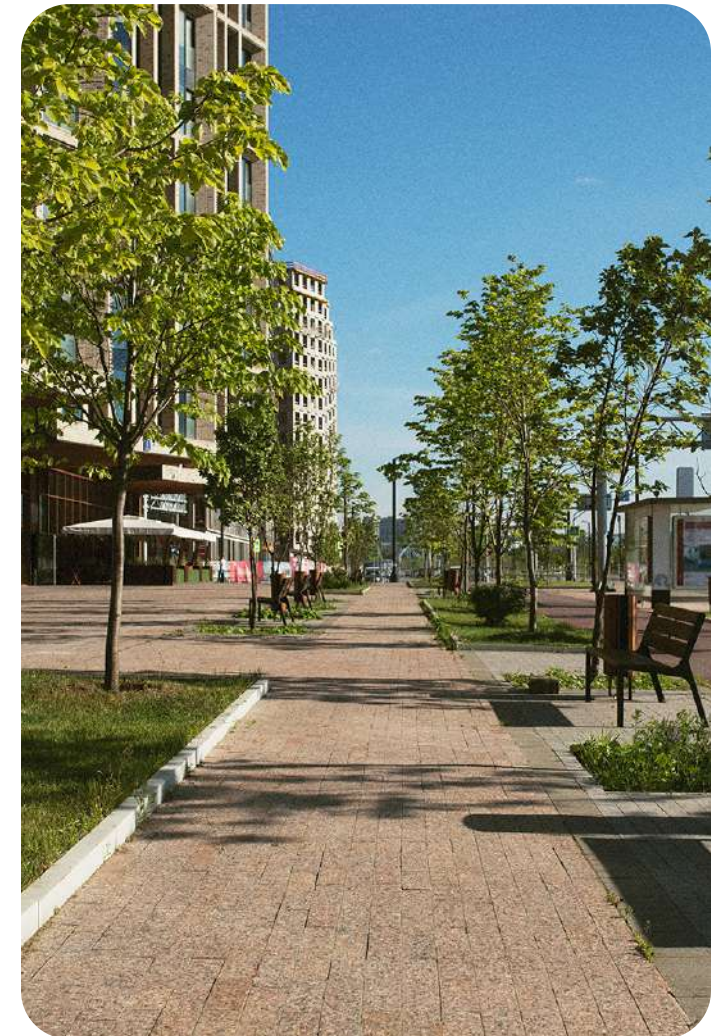
- Unreliable grant funding and inconsistent provincial, federal support.
- Lack of local-scale data slows planning and decision making.
- Limited communications capacity means few tools for rebuttals or engagement.

**Personal & Practical**

- Councillors balancing jobs, family, and roles.
- Women face higher rates of harassment and burnout.
- Confusion over councillor vs. staff responsibilities.
- Strong need for ready-to-use communications (talking points, social media, misinformation tools).

### A Note on Climate Caucus' Role in the Larger Landscape

We are honoured to work alongside brilliant eNGOs and service partners, many of whom we collaborate with on key projects. We will continue to build strong relationships and find ways to amplify others' work and collectively broaden our impact. We also want to ensure resources are not duplicated and, in particular, that local elected leaders' needs are always at the heart of our work. We will continue to build offerings specifically for climate-forward elected leaders using a "big tent" approach, in which people of many political leanings can contribute to solutions-focused work.



# The Big Vision

## For Our Communities and Our Country

Our communities are safe and prosperous, able to meet the challenges of climate impacts while continuously improving the lives of residents. Canada is a leader in GHG emissions reductions, and uses climate forward policies and infrastructure to build a safe, competitive and thriving country. Climate policy is seen as non-partisan and common sense; Climate Caucus, and our members, are lauded as champions for the future of their communities. Climate Caucus members feel supported in their work so as to continue to lead their communities and/or move to different orders of government.

## For Climate Caucus

Climate Caucus is a deeply respected, national non-profit with many hundreds of members across the country and a strong reputation amongst community leaders, funders and government representatives alike. We work at the forefront of climate policy strategy and implementation. When we put our efforts behind particular policies and advocacy campaigns we see tangible results, and we know dozens of policies have been successfully passed at a local level—and

provincially and federally—as a result of our support. We are the creator and incubator of impactful federal campaigns, and work across all orders of government to strengthen both policy results and relationships amongst climate-forward leaders.

## Using a Three-Tiered Lens

We work within complex, interconnected systems; our work must reflect that. This strategy considers opportunities with a three-tiered lens on the purpose—and potential impact—of Climate Caucus:

- **Local:** To accelerate local climate policy by providing local electeds with tools and resources they need in our current political climate to accelerate essential policies.
- **Provincial and Federal:** To catalyse local elected leaders to successfully advocate for, and influence, provincial and federal climate policies.
- **Societal:** To amplify the work of local elected leaders in helping to resolve large-scale societal challenges, such as social trust, polarisation, ongoing colonisation and misogyny.

### Why this triple focus?

Supporting local elected leaders is at the heart of our founding purpose. In such a pivotal political time, ensuring change occurs at both local and provincial/federal levels is essential for the wellbeing of our communities. Meanwhile, the role of local solutions — including relationship building — cannot be underestimated in the larger, intra-industry, intra-government work of battling forces such as polarisation and deepening social distrust. A holistic lens is essential: while we do not program specifically with this third focus in mind, we must understand the larger impacts of our work on the complex fabric of our communities—and federal politics—while ensuring the role of local elected leaders in systemic and existential change is clear to politicians at different orders of government, thought leaders and supporters.

## Seven Core Pillars Of Work

Our strategic plan builds on strong foundations of the first five years of work while recognising the pressing needs and challenges faced by local elected leaders. Increasingly, climate policy is difficult to implement not because of know-how, but communications and community engagement. Climate Caucus will offer deeper resources to address this, while acting as a “conierge” for local elected leaders—offering deeply strategic, personalised support that meets their specific community needs. Concurrently, we will continue to increase our lobbying, advocacy and relationship-building work across all orders of government, while working to improve equity of voices in local politics.

### Our work will prioritise three core areas of focus:

**1. Build Capacity** for local elected leaders to enact climate policy in and with their communities through increased communications prowess, knowledge, access to best practices, funding and political clout.

**2. Launch, Lead and Incubate Advocacy Campaigns** which amplify the voices of local elected leaders advocating for strong climate policy at a federal and provincial level.

**3. Bolster Resilience & Just Transitions** by sharing resources and opportunities that enable local elected leaders to prepare for and react cutting-edge, highly applicable solutions.

### Supported by pillars which:

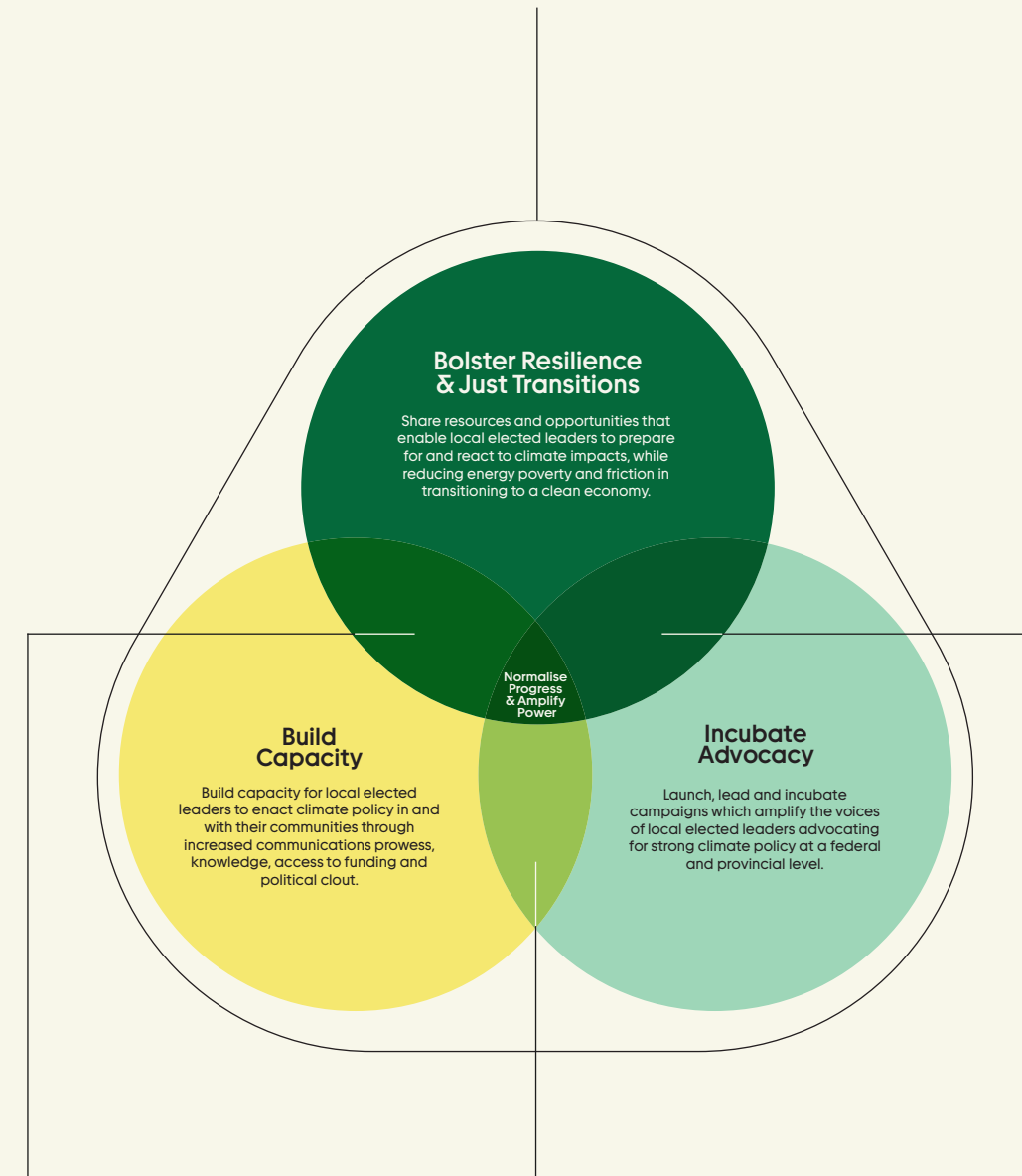
**4. Amplify Power**, to increase the network capacity of Climate Caucus and, in turn, further support local elected leaders in their work.

**5. Normalise Progress**, by continuing to underscore climate policy as a non-partisan, essential tool for keeping our communities safe.

**6. Support Indigenous Leadership & Reconciliation**, which underscores inalienable rights, and builds climate solutions rooted in place and shared stewardship.

**7. Expand Whose Voices Are Heard**, including working towards gender parity in politics and reducing racial—and other systemic biases and barriers—for underheard leaders.

## Our Interconnected Strategic Priorities



Building capacity expands potential for climate policies; bolstering knowledge ensures cutting-edge research influences those policies.

Large-scale advocacy work lays foundations for local progress, while capacity building at a local level increases ability for local leaders to enact change more broadly.

Practical, on-the-ground solutions are amplified by important provincial and federal asks that enable their success.



## 3.0b Strategic Focuses Explained

### 1. Build Capacity

**Build capacity for local elected leaders to enact climate policy in and with their communities through increased communications prowess, knowledge, access to funding and political clout.**

#### Why?

Municipalities are responsible for close to half of our country's GHG emissions—and local is where we all live. Local leaders play an essential role in helping communities to deal with climate impacts and in implementing necessary mitigation to minimise those future impacts.

#### How?

A regularly-reviewed series of resources designed to meet the needs of our current political times, including but not limited to:

- **Access to professional experts**  
Climate Caucus will develop a circle of experts in key areas including communications, lobbying, advocacy, public engagement and more, with regular office hours available to members.
- **Additional networking opportunities at local, provincial and federal levels**  
Facilitated by Climate Caucus through an all-government climate caucus (underway) and regular, specially-curated networking opportunities either hosted by Climate Caucus or other collaborative groups.
- **Training, including personalised support**  
Additional training that is practical, hands-on and offers multi-week deep-dives into topics that matter most to electeds, with Climate Caucus being considered a "concierge" for our leaders, offering bespoke help as required.
- **Resources that go to the heart of what local elected leaders need**  
Climate Caucus will retool our entire resources library to make information more accessible and relevant, focusing on motions, talking points and pushbacks, case studies and bylaws. This work will include partnering with organisations to reduce duplication where possible.
- **Ongoing networking and camaraderie in group meetings**  
Continuing our chapter calls while expanding working groups, to ensure we have chapters in regions across the country, as well as a wide range of topic-specific groups.
- **A strong focus on communications**  
Through working groups and additional resources, ensuring local elected leaders are able to counter mis/disinformation and build buy-in for key policies.
- **Mis/Disinformation hub**  
Creating resources and amplifying existing options specifically essential to counter growing mis/disinformation, polarisation and a growing anti-climate movement. This will include a mis/disinformation working group; collaborations with academic institutions (already underway), a common mythbusting database, and—as above—access to experts. This will include significant cross-sectoral partnerships.

## 2. Incubate Advocacy

Launch, lead and incubate campaigns which amplify the voices of local elected leaders advocating for strong climate policy at a federal and provincial level, building on previous successes of Help Cities Lead and Elbows Up for Climate. Support local elected leaders in their own advocacy and communications efforts, whether locally or federally.

**Why?**

Given the social trust of local elected leaders, this group is singularly placed to successfully advocate for climate policies at provincial and federal levels — and to be essential pillars in broader coalition work. Moreover, Climate Caucus can help local elected leaders recognise the amplified power they have when working together on key topics.

**How?**

Develop and co-create targeted, highly strategic advocacy campaigns and increase efficiencies for effective government relations, by:

- **Launching government and public-facing campaigns for and by local elected leaders**  
Climate Caucus will build internal capacity to become the leading organisation in creating, incubating and running campaigns by and for local elected leaders on federal climate policy. This may include major, multi-year campaigns—such as Elbows Up for Climate, which we are fortunate to be anchor partner of—alongside smaller campaigns in coalition with other organisations.

- **Building strong relationships with elected leaders at provincial and federal levels**  
We will continue to build relationships with elected leaders at all orders of government to be able to successfully lobby on key topics, and to provide essential information to our members through regular advocacy and GR calls. This work will happen year-round, not only during campaigns.
- **Developing further coalitions and collaborations with other organisations**  
We already have strong relationships with many organisations. Continuing to bolster these to share resources, and—in particular—to find mutual ground for shared campaigns, will further grow our impact.
- **Supporting members with their own advocacy**  
Developing resources, having access to experts and encouraging advocacy by local elected leaders will become a greater focus of our “Ask Us Anything” program, alongside our resource development.

## 3. Bolster Resilience &amp; Just Transitions

Share resources and opportunities that enable local elected leaders prepare for and react to climate impacts, while reducing energy poverty and friction in transitioning to a clean economy.

**Why?**

While we are building towards large-scale change, and seeding opportunities for policy wins at various orders of government, it is crucial to ensure that local elected leaders can enact policies which meet the immediate, urgent needs of their communities.

**How?**

This pillar will interact significantly with the others, and inform some of our advocacy, communications and networking work. Activities will include:

- **Advocating** for municipal, provincial and federal policies and associated funding that support disaster preparedness and response, alongside mitigating energy poverty.
- **Building and amplifying resources** that share cutting edge, highly applicable solutions in energy resilience, policy transition and nature-based infrastructure.
- **Adding an important municipal voice** to broader work—be it campaigns, policy briefings, research coalitions or working groups—that accelerate solutions.
- **Creating network and event opportunities** for municipal leaders to collectively problem solve together—and especially with other members of civic society—when implementing these solutions.

In particular, we will focus on the following areas of solution:

- **Energy Affordability** — Ending energy poverty is key to both equity and public support of long-term climate policies, including energy affordability, retrofits, clean energy access and responsible AI data centre resource use.
- **Climate Impacts: Preparedness and Response** — Resilience is cheaper and safer than recovery. Communities must be supported at federal and provincial levels through robust funding and processes — and know how to mitigate future risks.
- **The “How” of Transitioning** — We need to build greater practical pathways, stable funding and local capacity to turn clean economy goals into real jobs, resilient infrastructure, and lasting prosperity.
- **Bioregional and Nature-Based Solutions** — Working with nature-based infrastructure protects people while restoring ecosystems, while a focus on bioregions offers new ways into local solutions and conversations.
- **Participatory Democracy & Building Support** — Supporting climate-forward local elected leaders to use cutting-edge, proven ways to deepen community-engagement, democratic processes and social trust.

4. Amplify Power

## Increase network capacity and reputation of Climate Caucus to, in turn, further support local elected leaders in their work.

### Why?

The more recognisable Climate Caucus is as a powerful voice in the political landscape, the more influence we, and our members, can have at important tables — and the more likely we are to build economies of scale in our advocacy and capacity work.

### How?

Build Climate Caucus’ network, and reputation, through a dedicated focus on recruitment and PR, including but not limited to:

- **Significantly increasing membership across provinces and territories**  
We will conduct additional, targeted recruitment to increase membership and—of those members—deepen engagement in our activities.
- **Developing broader inter-government relationships for and with members, including through an all-government network**  
By developing an inter-government climate caucus, we can support our members in their political careers across all orders of government while also increasing networking opportunities or shared advocacy opportunities.
- **Building relationships with politically-adjacent organisations** such as think tanks and chambers of commerce.
- **Increasing visibility of Climate Caucus through increased press coverage, speaking opportunities and other high-profile opportunities**  
Building our organisation reputation will, in

turn, support our members while also enabling additional funding opportunities over time.

- **Deepening our network capacities to ensure chapters or cohorts allow for organic peer support**  
Consistently analysing what’s working (and what isn’t) in our network meetings, including through topics, speakers, and types of working groups available, will be essential for ongoing engagement. We will expand into additional chapters as membership growth allows, and continually offer working groups on a rolling basis.



5. Normalise Progress

## Support climate policy as a non-partisan, essential tool for keeping our communities safe.

### Why?

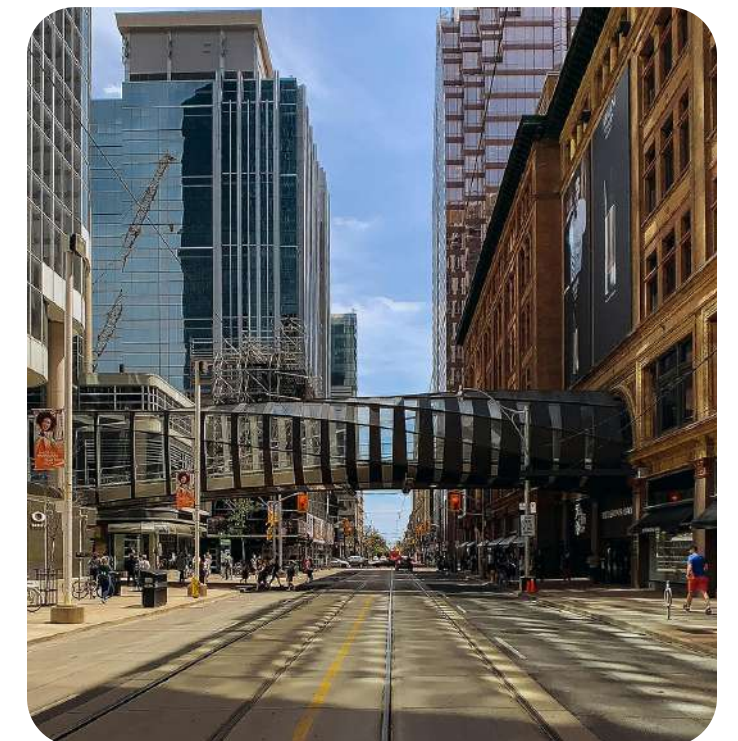
With a public deprioritisation of climate, ensuring safety of our communities through both mitigation and adaptation is becoming increasingly difficult. We can play an effective, important role in reversing this in ways that other organisations without the social trust of local leaders cannot.

### How?

Ensuring our communications create a “big tent” wherever possible, while making the case for climate policy as “common sense,” including:

- **Deeply considered, strategic messaging**  
Using the most up-to-date knowledge about how we communicate about climate, especially speaking to the co-benefits of policies and repositioning climate policy as common sense – without ceding ground on key climate facts and positions.
- **Building relationships with “unlikely spokespeople” who broaden conceptions of who climate champions are**  
Building connections with other leaders in civic society (healthcare workers, firefighters, union workers) or local elected leaders who would not consider themselves “environmentalists” to broaden the expectation of who is prioritising climate in public dialogue.

- **Developing and launching campaigns and materials which cut through political partisanship and polarization on key climate topics**  
As above, building campaigns and strategies that speak to the realities of our times, and move beyond more traditional environmental language.
- **Utilising an “opt-in” approach to campaigns**  
We will work on a wide variety of campaigns that may speak to different audiences amongst our membership — not every member is expected to de-facto join each campaign.



6. Support Indigenous Collaboration & Reconciliation

## Build collaborative relationships that deepen reconciliation and amplify Indigenous voices in municipal leadership.

### Why?

Prioritising how we—as an organisation, as leaders, as governments—work with Indigenous Nations is essential. Not only is this work fair and right, and in line with UNDRIP, but underscoring inalienable rights and building climate solutions rooted in place and shared stewardship, leads to better outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members alike.

### How?

Given we are at the beginning stages of deepening our work in this area, our plans will be iterative and will rely deeply on the conversations and relationships we are building with Indigenous leaders and consultants in redress and reconciliation. As such, this list of activities is not exhaustive, and will grow over time. We commit to:

**Working with Indigenous leaders to build a robust plan** by developing an in-depth strategy for our work in this area in 2026 and beyond.

**Launching a decolonizing committee** who will guide our work in the coming years.

**Supporting Indigenous governance initiatives** by building relationships with Indigenous leaders bolstering Indigenous representation in municipal governments.

**Bolstering creative approaches to answering the question** “How can municipal climate policy help to build partnerships with Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders?”



7. Expand Whose Voices Are Heard

## Contribute to increasing gender parity in politics and reducing racial—and other systemic biases and barriers—for underheard leaders.

### Why?

Canada ranks 59th globally in women’s representation in national parliaments. Only one in five mayors in Canada are women and just over a third of councillors are women. Meanwhile, racialised people are significantly underrepresented at all orders of government: no government apparatus includes racialised representatives proportionate to our population. Ensuring political conversations represent all Canadians is essential — because it’s the right thing to do, and given that women are likely to support climate policies that climate impacts disproportionately affect racialised communities.

### How?

**Bolster our Women’s Caucus** with high-profile, connected speakers and through resources and support systems for local women elected leaders.

**Develop a strategy to further support racialised members of Climate Caucus** through partner conversations, member discussions and bold insights from our community.

**Actively amplify the work of partners** who are at the forefront of increasing equity in municipal politics.

**Ensure an equity lens in our policy work** by including robust metrics to our work, regularly analysing our work, and listening to members’ voices.

**Program with climate equity in mind** to ensure that this crucial piece of ensuring safe, prosperous communities for everyone is prioritised by Climate Caucus and by our members.



### Some of the metrics we will use to measure success include:

- Successes with provincial and federal advocacy — to be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- Number of policies passed by members.
- Number of active members.
- Demographics of our membership, including a focus on leaders from underrepresented communities and demographics.
- Number of media mentions of Climate Caucus and/or other strategic, public opportunities.
- Number of members seeking reelection and/or different orders of government.

Additional metrics will be developed each year as part of an annual work plan. Other metrics that speak to larger societal and political movements are harder to quantify, but we will use an honest, rational approach to assessing our progress in these areas each year.

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## Thank You

Our work to date has been made possible by brilliant volunteers, collaborative partners, deeply supportive funders who see both our vision and potential — and, of course, the local elected leaders who are the purpose of all our activities. Thank you.

We look forward to continuing to work with you all to enact this ambitious, achievable strategy in the years to come.



# Climate Caucus

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